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SPORTS

Winchester girls soccer takes care of business on and off the pitch as the unbeaten season continues

JOE MCCONNELL | SPORTS EDITOR

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The Winchester High girls soccer team pose for a photo during the annual Glen Doherty Memorial Foundation Road Race on Sunday, Sept. 21. They are, from left, front row, Elise Alvares, Ashley Mitchell, Audrey Houllahan, Sophie Shapiro, Amelia Holmes, Amanda Mitchell, junior coach Kretschmer, Lilly Ossen, Lila Roeder and Amelia Burke. Second row, Josie Monk, Rhynn Fitzpatrick-Canfield, Solana Murphy, Stella Garcia, Charlotte Bjerke, Grace Wilhoite, Sara Stewart, GG Fantini, Gaby Hermsdorf, Juliet Semmes, Ma Emma Kiernan, Courtney Fisher and Grace Bonnett. The WHS girls soccer program has played volunteering at this event since 2013. COURTESY PHOTO/MICHELLE ROSS

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The Winchester High School girls soccer team (6-0-1) had a week off between games, but instead of savoring its undefeated record, they can be seen helping their neighbors around town. But once they returned to the pitch, nothing changed. The Red & Black were able to maintain their winning ways after shutting out visiting Reading, 1-0 on Sept. 24.

On one of their days off, the Winchester girls spent it at the annual Glen Doherty Memorial Foundation Road Race on Sunday, Sept. 21.

There's a limit to the team's volunteer work during the season, for obvious reasons, but they still make time to help out local groups, according to Coach Michelle Ross.

"We don't volunteer every week in the fall given our schedule, but we try to do something at least four times during the course of the season (twice a month)," the coach said. "Our volunteer activities during the season include The Dwelling Place and supporting the Glen Doherty Memorial Foundation Road Race. We also like to do something to spread kindness within the Winchester community throughout the rest of the year.

"During the spring season, we serve as guest coaches for any Winchester Youth Soccer coach interested in having a high school coach or player come manage a practice. This happens every week from April through June, and it usually involves 20-plus teams," added Ross.

It's all about community

The Red & Black girls on the pitch continue to prove that true success is measured not only in wins and goals, but also in the impact that the players make beyond the game. Known for their discipline, skill and teamwork on the pitch, the team has also built a proud tradition of giving back to the community that so passionately supports them.

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It's now been 10 straight years that the program has volunteered at The Dwelling Place in Woburn. The Dwelling Place, a collaboration initiative hosted by local churches, prepares and serves hot meals for needy individuals and families at the United Methodist Church.

For a decade, Winchester soccer players have traded in their uniforms for aprons. They would greet guests with smiles, while serving food to them, which embodies that spirit of service.

Ross noted the players embrace these opportunities with the same commitment that they bring to the field.

"We talk a lot about being a part of something bigger than ourselves," she said. "When our players step into the kitchen of The Dwelling Place, they see firsthand the power of teamwork and compassion. It is all about service, gratitude and community connection."

The program's tradition of giving back does not stop there. Since 2013, the Winchester girls have also been deeply involved in the aforementioned Glen Doherty Memorial Foundation Road Race. From organizing and volunteering to cheering on the participants, the players have stood behind the event every step of the way.

The race honors Glen Doherty, a Winchester native and former Navy SEAL, who gave his life in service to his country. The foundation provides scholarships and support to current and former military personnel and their families, making the soccer team's involvement most meaningful.

In addition, the players and coaches also take pride in giving back to the Winchester Youth Soccer program, continuing a tradition started by former coach Rick Emmanuel.

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Each spring, high school players and staff volunteer to coach at instructional sessions for any Winchester youth soccer team interested in having them. They run the practices, share tips and above all else allow younger players to meet their role models on the high school team. These sessions are filled with energy, encouragement and fun, which creates a bridge between generations of Winchester soccer players that helps foster a lifelong love for the sport.

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For the players, these experiences become lasting memories. It's like scoring a game-winning goal.

Senior captain Amanda Mitchell reflected on the program's spirit of volunteerism: "It feels good to know that as a team we are contributing to something bigger. Soccer brings us together, but giving back connects us to our community in a way that is just as important."

The combination of competitive spirit and community service has become the hallmark of Winchester girls soccer. As they continue to take care of business on the pitch, their commitment in serving others ensures that their victories extend far beyond the scoreboard.

Back to work on the pitch

The Red & Black girls finally broke the scoreless tie against aforementioned Reading in the 79th minute on a goal by their freshman ignitor Charlotte Bjercke. That clutch score sealed the deal on the team's hard-fought 1-0 win on Wednesday, Sept. 24.

"The Rockets played an ultra-defensive game, packing 10 players penalty box area. They showed little interest in counterattacking, Ross. "We dominated possession throughout, while registering an

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astonishing 42 shots on goal. But Reading's low back defense, coupled with some inspired goalkeeping, kept the game scoreless throughout most of the match."

Despite relentless pressure, Winchester could not find the back of the net until junior Sophie Shapiro expertly initiated a corner kick in the waning moments of the game to set up the winning goal by Bjerke, who was able to run past the Reading defenders to get to the ball, before booming a powerful header that went sailing into the net.

Ross said of Bjerke's impact in this game: "(Bjerke), who is one of our energizers, came off the bench, and completely shifted the (momentum) on the field. She changed the mindset and tempo of the game to give us that extra spark to beat Reading. That kind of impact is exactly what we look for in our specialists."

Reading recorded zero shots on goal, while at the other end of the field its tactics ultimately failed to succeed.

"Although we were frustrated by the lack of goals, we still showed persistence and tactical awareness to earn this well-deserved win," said Ross.

The coach also praised her team's resilience.

"I'm incredibly proud of how the team kept their composure, stayed patient and adapted its approach throughout the game," Ross said. "Despite the frustration of a close game, they never stopped believing in themselves and each other, and in the end, they figured out exactly what had to be done to earn this well-deserved win."

After the win over Reading, the Winchester girls had since been ready to host Belmont on Sept. 27, and close out the month of September at

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Wakefield on Tuesday, Sept. 30. The game against the Warriors will begin at 4:15 p.m. They will then welcome Lexington to Knowlton to begin a brand-new month with a Friday Night Lights spectacular on Oct. 3 at 6 p.m.

Joe McConnell is a longtime, award-winning sports editor for numerous North Shore publications. He began covering Winchester sports for the News last November.

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It was the third meeting this year between Middlesex League boys basketball rivals Lexington (16-5, 11th seed) and Winchester

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After the Winchester High wrestlers competed hard over two days last weekend (Feb. 20, 21) in the State Division 1

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(17-4, 22nd seed). They split the first two during the regular season, thus making this Round of 32 postseason matchup the impromptu rubber game of this year's series, with the

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Meet at North Andover High School, Mother Nature gave them a break to rest and recuperate with Monday's blizzard that resulted in two days off from school. There

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Winchester boys hockey advances to the Sweet 16 after beating Wachusett in the tournament opener

The Winchester High boys hockey team (12-9-2), the 17th seed, edged the 16th-seeded Wachusett Regional Mountaineers (18-2-1), 5-4 in a Round of 32 Division 1 state tournament game at Westborough's Northstar Ice Arena on Feb. 25. The Red & Black will now take on top seed Catholic Memorial (18-2-1)

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SPORTS

With postseason starting Friday night, WHS boys hoop seniors English, Sarpong, Burbine join Middlesex League elite

The Winchester High boys basketball team, the 22nd seed, will take on Middlesex League rival Lexington, the 11th seed, to begin the Division 1 state tournament in the Round of 32 on Friday night, Feb. 27, starting at 6 p.m. These teams are so evenly matched, beginning with the

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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March 4, 2026

FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

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Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

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The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and

Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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